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The Way that Islamic People are Portrayed in the Media Today

Today, there are a vast number of media platforms in the world. The media such as the television, films, and music may promote or fail to support some issues due to their strong influence on the audience. As such, media plays a fundamental part in the coverage of what is happening all around the globe (Jahedi, Faiz, and Jayakaran 24). This is one of the advantages of media. On the other hand, it is also true that media can negatively influence what people think about others around the world. In other words, the media can just decide to under or over present matters about certain groups of people or nations. Therefore, it is critical to note that some of the events emanating from specific parts of the world get less coverage than they should (Jahedi, Faiz, and Jayakaran 24). As an influential aspect of the society, media has intense power as well control over most people’s perspective in regard to the various issues. As such, in the context of religion, media plays a big role on how religion is portrayed in the society. Individuals adopt their lifestyles as well as express specific views by means of prime examples of apprehensive concepts and idea concerning the present issue around the world as presented in the media (Jahedi, Faiz, and Jayakaran 24). Since the media greatly influences people, there is a dire need to present religion accurately so that the audience does not misunderstand issues. The world has a variety of religions, and one of these that have ever been on the media is Islam and Muslims. Therefore, this paper aims at assessing how the media influences the perception of its viewers when covering Islam in the media, acknowledging the effect laid upon to the general public. This investigation synthesizes information from several sources, both primary and secondary.

Different scholars have noted that media has the tendency to portray Islam as fanatic as well as violent religion. With a focus on several newspapers from different parts of the world, the literature indicates that many of them portray Islam negatively by referring to this religion as ‘others’ (Norris, Montague, and Marion 13). It has been argued that through the stereotypical perspective, the Muslims have been represented as a military threat to extremism, democracy, and society. Anti-Muslim prejudice has emphasized referential strategies on the news, depicting Islam as extremists and supporter of terror (Norris, Montague, and Marion 13). As such, the way the media portray Muslims makes them seem prejudicial and a threat to the entire world.

Other scholars have examined how the Islam and Muslims are depicted most of the times in the *New York Times* news after terror attacks. One of the best examples that many of the literature studies focus on is September 11, 2001 attack (Norris, Montague, and Marion 13). The analysis of the texts uses some of the newspapers and has found ideological themes such as threat, evil, violence, and so on. It has been said that this helps to present the Islam as a threat to the stability of the globe. The media insensitively depict this religion negatively through the generation and selection of what journalist want to depict in a way that is censored (Norris, Montague, and Marion 13). The media, therefore, deliberately create a biased representation of Islam through the way it emphasizes the coverage of the chaotic situations while at the same time ignoring the positive aspects of the Islamic nations. It has been held that the *New York Times* has managed to construct dichotomies of moderate versus extremist as well as external Muslims versus internal Muslims (Norris, Montague, and Marion 13). The American Muslims are shown to be peaceful or moderate Muslim. On the other hand, the external Muslims are demonstrated to be extremists, who exercise violence.

Other authors have taken the analysis of this matter a step further by analyzing various other platforms of media information. Most of the writers focus on the United States mainstream press such as *The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles, The Wall Street Journal, and* *The Christian Science Monitor* (Norris, Montague, and Marion 13)*.* Through the use of frame analysis, these sources of media information were compared, and it was realized that the treatment of the Islam by the U.S is different. A frame means the constructions of the social reality that emanate from the decision made by the journalists about what information are to be included in the news report (Ahlin and Nicklas 15). It also encompasses the language that is used in any particular issue and what matters are stressed. A close look at these platforms in the U.S reveals that they use the terms such as determined, stern-willed, and autocratic to describe the Islam. As such, the American media has been cited to fuel the distortion of the image of Islam, with 90% percent of the Americans being unfavorable to them (Ahlin and Nicklas 15).

The most extensive part of the literature regards qualitative examinations on Islam and Muslims; it shows that these groups have been demonstrated negatively to the rest of the world. The picture that is painted is that of the media generalizing the values ascribed to the Islam (Ahlin and Nicklas 15). The images feed the minds of people stereotypes that according to the literature distance the Islamic World from the West. These activities lead to the development of fear among the westerners; they contribute to polarized societies and make the Islam the ‘others’. In the majority of the scenarios, these stereotypes are said to contribute to the belief that Muslims are ever capable of conducting terrorist acts (Ahlin and Nicklas 15). The overarching themes about Islam occur on the basis of religion, culture, and political structure. Studies that have been conducted in Germany and Australia have confirmed the same. For example, there is much literature that covers the culture of Muslims. In Germany and Belgium, the Islam women have been denied the right to wear clothes such as Burqa, niqab and hijab, among others (Ahlin and Nicklas 15). The media in these countries frequently write about certain Islamic culture with specific mandatory traditions. The issues are not aimed at how Islamic women wear, but the problem is that their immigration will influence the society and in worst case scenario begin to perform their religious rituals. It is held that the media has been at the forefront of damaging the image and cultural values of Islam (Ahlin and Nicklas 15). Additionally, cultural generation is common in these countries as framed by the media, expressing negatively about the genders among the Muslims.

Politically, many of the countries, particularly the North Africa and the Middle East have been and are still shown to be ruled by dictators, with religion being strictly linked to the constitution. Therefore, they are not considered to be democratic (Brown 297). This belongs to a group of the political factor in which the various media platforms argue that the world consists of anti-poles, and there exist struggles between the democracies versus dictatorships. Reviews of the earlier research demonstrate that there is a common belief in which the nations that are considered democratic are superior, and the western ideas are universally desired (Brown 297). In this regard, the media portrays the Islamic principles as fundamentalism that only creates the basis for the Muslim suicide bombers motivated by the purpose to harm the West. It is argued that the media deliberately ignores the positive development of Islamic states as undemocratic (Brown 298). It is difficult to come across a media platform discussing the stories associated with extraordinary success among these nations, either in political matters or any other spheres of life. In the same way, certain media focus on some political figures, giving them the role of representing the whole of the Islamic religion. The media, therefore, promote positively the political values of the West; in contrast, they show the Middle East and North African people to be dangerous and insecure (Brown 298).

Another media stereotype focuses on the portrayal of the Muslim women in the West. The media help in the representation of the Muslim women as passive victims of the male power as imposed upon them by their historical culture (Kamalipour 88). These women are also shown as feminists who oppose this power by fighting in a disadvantaged position. Sometimes the media criticizes Islam for how it marginalizes women and provides a sense of disproportionate power to the male gender. The acceptance of Islam is translated to women giving up their rights and equality since they are represented as incapable of gaining freedom from the oppressive religion (Kamalipour 88). As an outcome, the most common phrases or words used by the media to describe Islamic women include ‘beaten,’ ‘segregated,’ ‘hated,’ and ‘extremism’, among others (Mesic 32). While this is the case, some of the Islamic women have willingly chosen to follow their traditions. Some of them observe their historical culture and still end up living independently from what the media describes as male power over women (Mesic 32).

Further, different authors assert that if one just decides to go through some of the past and even recent articles written by different media platforms, one thing that catches the attention of the audience is matters of war in the Islamic nations (Malcolm, Alan Bairner, and Graham 215). The press coverage about the Islam has been dominated by conflict and war. While people read and view more coverage on local culture and normal life in these nations and the world, the media depict them as poor (Malcolm, Alan Bairner, and Graham 215). As an outcome, this has only resulted in the creation of negative images about these states. When a person compares this to what is said about the developing countries, there is a sharp contrast. Here, most of the matters concern how one or more developing nations have offered economic assistance to the developing world. If not this, the rest of the coverage in the media is about visits by the westerners or sports (Malcolm, Alan Bairner, and Graham 215). From literature reviews programs about the Islamic world, these countries are not often featured in the media when it comes to any successes. This is the reason some people are ‘turned off’ completely by any news about the Islamic nations. The reason is in part because of the constant negative diet of the image the media give them (Alghamdi 198). Every time individuals turn on their TV or read a newspaper, the information one reads there is another war, destruction, or poverty in these nations (Mesic 32).

Going further with the discussion, it is imperative to note that a pilot studies have been conducted in which BBC journalists joined some of the ordinary TV watchers. Attention has been put on examining what the viewers understood from news on their TV reports (Alghamdi 198). The studies began with one of the BBC’s journalists being shown what he had reported on continuing war in Iran. The journalist has reported some distressing images that had a strong impact regarding producing greater sympathy from the audience. Also, it had the normal negative impact of media depiction of the Islamic nations as the interpretation set more on war images in these countries (Alghamdi 198). When the comments from the viewers were taken, most of them seemed to state that that was an Islamic problem because they saw it like that. Here, the notion created by this piece in the minds of people is that Muslims are just not very good at controlling themselves (Alghamdi 198). Also, there are other reasons for scholars to suspect that the news has been censored to focus on issues such as fights, conflicts, and wars in the Islamic nations while none of this is covered in the developed states.

In summary, according to the literature, the mass media play a significant role in the provision of beliefs, stereotypes, prejudice, opinions, and ideologies. The earlier studies have shown that dominant mass media have the tendency to marginalize the Islam and Muslims. The negative portrayal of the Islam became intense following the attack that occurred on September 11, 2001. The media managed to paint a negative picture of the Islam all over the globe. Therefore, the essay, to a large extent, has managed to assess how the media influences the perception of its viewers when covering Islam in the media. This investigation synthesized information from several sources, both primary and secondary.

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